



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OFFICE OF  
SOLID WASTE AND EMERGENCY  
RESPONSE

MAR 4 1997

**MEMORANDUM**

SUBJECT: National Remedy Review Board Recommendations on the Tar Creek  
Superfund Site

FROM: Bruce K. Means, Chair *BK Means*  
National Remedy Review Board

TO: Myron O. Knudson, Director  
Superfund Division  
EPA Region 6

**Purpose**

The National Remedy Review Board (NRRB) has completed its review of the proposed remedial action for the Tar Creek Superfund site in Ottawa County, Oklahoma. This memorandum documents the NRRB's advisory recommendations.

**Context for NRRB Review**

As you recall, the Administrator announced the NRRB as one of the October 1995 Superfund Administrative Reforms to help control remedy costs and promote consistent and cost-effective decisions. The NRRB furthers these goals by providing a cross-regional, management-level, "real time" review of high cost (and thus potentially controversial) proposed response actions. The Board will review all proposed cleanup actions where: (1) the estimated cost of the preferred alternative exceeds \$30 million, or (2) the preferred alternative costs more than \$10 million and is 50% more expensive than the least-costly, protective, ARAR-compliant alternative. The NRRB review evaluates the proposed actions for consistency with the National Contingency Plan and relevant Superfund policy and guidance. It focuses on the nature and complexity of the site; health and environmental risks; the range of alternatives that address site risks;

the quality and reasonableness of the cost estimates for alternatives; Regional, State/tribal, and other stakeholder opinions on the proposed actions (to the extent they are known at the time of review); and any other relevant factors.

Generally, the NRRB makes "advisory recommendations" to the appropriate Regional decision maker before the Region issues the proposed plan. The Region will then include these recommendations in the Administrative Record for the site. While the Region is expected to give the Board's recommendations substantial weight, other important factors, such as subsequent public comment or technical analyses of remedial options, may influence the final Regional decision. It is important to remember that the NRRB does not change the Agency's current delegations or alter in any way the public's role in site decisions.

### **NRRB Advisory Recommendations**

The NRRB reviewed the package for the residential properties operable unit at the Tar Creek site and discussed related issues with EPA Remedial Project Manager Noel Bennett and Toxicologist Ghassan Khoury; Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality representatives Monty Elder and Kelly Dixon; InterTribal Environmental Council representative Kent Curtis; and Quapaw Tribe representative John Gault on January 28, 1997. Based on this review and discussion, the NRRB generally supports the Region's preferred alternative. In addition, the Board makes the following comments and recommendations for the Region's consideration.

- Given the widespread distribution of chat mining wastes throughout the community and the resulting potential for multiple pathway exposures, the Board recommends that the Region clarify the relationship of this action to future actions the Region may take to address remaining contamination at the site (e.g., chat piles, tailings ponds, undeveloped land, industrial properties, etc.).
- In view of this contamination and uncertainties in implementing the remedy (e.g., the ability to secure access to all contaminated residential properties), community protective measures are likely to play an important supplemental role at this site in protecting human health. The Region should therefore include in the preferred alternative (Alternative 2 in the proposed plan) the provisions for counseling and public education (e.g., emphasizing proper personal hygiene and the importance of removing indoor dust).
- The Region should make it clear to residents that there may be a residual indoor dust threat following soil excavation, that normal household cleaning will reduce the contamination to a protective level, and that the Region will loan HEPA

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vacuums to residents to expedite this process, if this service is not provided by others.

- The Region should encourage the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the State to address potential recontamination sources (e.g., to control redistribution of chat around residences, potential deterioration of exterior lead-based paint, etc.).
- Given the preliminary results of a recent blood lead study that indicate a significant portion of the children in the Tar Creek area already experience elevated blood lead levels, the Board encourages continued blood lead monitoring of children through the State and local health agencies. Such monitoring would help local public health officials track the overall success of multi jurisdictional efforts to reduce childhood lead exposures in Tar Creek.

The NRRB appreciates the Region's efforts to work closely with the State, Indian Tribes, and the community to identify the current proposed remedy. The Board members also express their appreciation to the Region, the State of Oklahoma, the InterTribal Environmental Council, and the Quapaw Tribe for their participation in the review process. We encourage Region 6 management and staff to work with their Regional NRRB representative and the Region 2/6 Accelerated Response Center at Headquarters to discuss appropriate follow-up actions.

Please do not hesitate to give me a call if you have any questions at 703-603-8815.

cc: J. Saginaw  
S. Luftig  
E. Laws  
T. Fields  
E. Shaw  
B. Breen  
E. Cotsworth

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